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# United Nations Population Award 2009

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award, established by the Assembly in its resolution 36/201. The report covers the year 2009 and was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1982/112.

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# Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the United Nations Population Award 2009

## I. Introduction

1. On 17 December 1981, the General Assembly adopted resolution 36/201 entitled "Establishment of the United Nations Population Award". The Award is presented annually to an individual or individuals, to an institution or institutions, or to any combination thereof, for the most outstanding contribution to increasing awareness of population questions or to finding solutions to them.

2. The Committee for the United Nations Population Award selects the laureate for the Award. The Committee is composed of representatives of 10 States Member of the United Nations elected by the Economic and Social Council for a period of three years.

3. In its decision 41/445, the General Assembly amended article 2, paragraph 1, of the regulations governing the United Nations Population Award so that an individual and an institution could share the award.

4. In its decision 1987/129, the Economic and Social Council amended the rules of procedure of the Committee for the Population Award accordingly.

5. The current elected members of the Committee are Algeria, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, Peru, Sweden and the United Republic of Tanzania.

6. During its first regular meeting, on 28 January 2009, the Committee elected Ambassador Hamidon Ali (Malaysia) as Chairperson for 2009.

## II. United Nations Population Award 2009

7. The Committee received 20 nominations from qualified nominators for the 2009 Award. Of these, 9 were for the individual category and 11 for the institutional category. On 23 February 2009, in accordance with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly and after a thorough review of the nominations, the Committee selected Dr. Mahmoud Fahmy Fathalla of Egypt in the individual category and Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense of Nicaragua in the institutional category.

8. The Committee selected Dr. Mahmoud Fahmy Fathalla in recognition of his exemplary achievements in contributing to increased understanding of population issues and to the design of effective solutions for them, as well as for being a highly effective advocate of action in the fields of family planning, reproductive health, reproductive rights and maternal health. Dr. Fathalla obtained his medical degree in 1957 and a doctorate in obstetrics and gynaecology from Cairo University in 1962; in 1967, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Fathalla began his academic career in 1972 as Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Assiut University, Egypt, where he continues to teach; he was also Dean of the medical school at the same university (1978-1986). From 1989 to 1992, Dr. Fathalla served as Director of the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, an inter-agency activity sponsored by the United

Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO).

9. Dr. Fathalla was the founder of the Egyptian Fertility Care Society (1974), one of the first family planning organizations in the Arab world. Since then, he has been a valuable adviser to the Egyptian Family Planning Association, the Ministry of Health of Egypt and the National Population Council of Egypt. Internationally, many organizations have benefited from Dr. Fathalla's counsel, such as UNFPA, WHO, the International Women's Health Coalition, EngenderHealth, the Programme for Appropriate Technology in Health, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Committee on Population of the National Research Council of the United States of America. Dr. Fathalla is also remembered for the production of a video entitled "Why did Mrs. X die?", which was part of the WHO project, Road to Maternal Death. The video has been widely used in its original versions (English and Arabic) and has been translated into French and Spanish.

10. The combination of a solid biomedical background and the rare ability to communicate and to negotiate made Dr. Fathalla a successful advocate of human reproductive health and rights. His effective contributions to the understanding of population questions and to the design of effective solutions for them have brought him many honours. In addition to awards from his own country, such as the Pioneer Award from the President and the First Achievement Award from the Egyptian Women's Health Association, the Universities of Helsinki, Toronto and Uppsala have awarded Dr. Honoris Causa degrees to Dr. Fathalla. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have also made him an honorary fellow. As a fervent advocate of maternal health, he is one of the founders of the highly acclaimed and successful Safe Motherhood Initiative, which has saved millions of lives around the world. Dr. Fathalla is also recognized as a promoter of the concept of the woman-centred agenda in contraceptive research and development.

11. The Committee for the United Nations Population Award selected Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense in recognition of its outstanding achievements in training community leaders, community educators and community health volunteers to mobilize local communities and build local networks across Nicaragua that seek to improve the human and material conditions of the poor; promote social and community development and gender equality; and protect natural resources and the environment. It was also selected for its contribution to eradicating poliomyelitis, reducing maternal and infant and child mortality rates; and increasing literacy in Nicaragua. Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense, formed in 1978, is a non-governmental organization that brings together local communities. Since its inception, one of the priorities of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense has been to train population leaders to mobilize the needy, the oppressed and members of poor communities. In 1992, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense became an institutionalized organization.

12. Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense has a wide range of activities that cover 120 municipalities and 2,000 local communities. In more recent years, as a result of major political changes in Nicaragua, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense has been able to redefine and reorganize its activities, engaging in many communal activities

with the participation of other official and non-governmental organizations. Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense has received technical and financial support from international organizations in Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden, as well as from UNFPA.

13. The activities of Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense have been associated with important changes in the population of Nicaragua, including the eradication of poliomyelitis in the 1980s, the reduction of maternal and infant and child mortality rates, and the increase in literacy rates. More recently, Movimiento Comunal Nicaragüense has been involved in activities that target youth and adolescents with a view to improving gender relations, eliminating domestic violence, preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and reducing early pregnancies.

## III. Financial matters

14. As at 31 December 2008, the Trust Fund for the United Nations Population Award had a total fund balance of $1,812,386.37. Interest income in 2008 was $58,226.47. Expenditures in 2009, including prizes given to the two laureates, totalled $75,053.13.